Online gaming enhances career prospects and develops soft skills, finds new study

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Online gaming behavior can encourage gamers to gain a variety of soft skills which could assist them with training to support their career aspirations, according to new research from the University of Surrey.

Previously, very little was known about online gaming behavior based on the actual games played and how career interests are reflected in what people play. To examine this correlation, in collaboration with Game Academy Ltd, Surrey researchers investigated the gaming behavior of 16,033 participants to explore how the hobby could support video game players' future career planning and professional training.

The participants played a different number of games on Steam—a video game digital distribution service and storefront. Researchers studied the 800 most-played games and only included participants for whom they had access to gender and job details.

Researchers discovered that IT professionals and engineers played puzzle-platform games, which possibly enhance their spatial skills. People in managerial roles showed an interest in action roleplay games where organizational and planning skills are involved and engineering professionals were associated with strategy games which often require problem-solving and spatial skills. There were apparent gender differences too—females preferred playing single-player games, whereas males preferred playing shooting games.

Dr. Anna-Stiina Wallinheimo, lead author of the study, Cognitive Psychologist, and Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Surrey's Center for Translation Studies (CTS) said, "In recruitment processes, the best candidates may be missed because organizations do not consider the soft skills that have been gained through non-work activities (for example, online gaming). As a result of our research, we believe applicants' online gaming experiences should be highlighted because these acquired soft skills can really help to develop their all-round strengths for the job at hand."

Dr. Anesa Hosein, co-author of the study and Associate Professor in Higher Education at the University of Surrey said, "By understanding to

what extent career interests are reflected in game playing, we may be able to demonstrate more clearly how these align with career interests and encourage employers to understand the value of the soft skills associated with gaming. Our research could also inspire game developers to work on honing these soft skills more closely in their design. Furthermore, places of learning, such as universities, could allow students to reflect and incorporate gaming as part of their career development and consider how gaming can be included in the curriculum to enhance alignment between students' learning, career aspirations and extra-curricular gaming interests."

This research was published in *Simulation & Gaming*

More information: Anna-Stiina Wallinheimo et al, How Online Gaming Could Enhance Your Career Prospects, *Simulation & Gaming* (2022). DOI: 10.1177/10468781221137361

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